Turkish Heritage of Hungarian Dietary Culture

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Introduction

Hungarian rural dietary culture carries a rich oriental heritage. Our culture received three waves of oriental impact. During the time of the Conquest, we brought along elements of knowledge which had entered our culture through living amidst Turkic peoples. The names of cereals (*búza* and *árpa* meaning wheat and barley), the names of fruits (*alma* and *szőlő* meaning apple and grape), other plant names and the entire vocabulary of sheep-keeping are of Turkic origin (Kakuk 1996), except for those words which became incorporated when the Vlachian stratum of shepherds appeared – most of which are related to the techniques of processing yew's milk. The Cuman (*kun*) and Jassic (*jász*) population, which settled in Hungary in the 13th century, enriched our culture by a new Oriental layer which was further reinforced later by the Turkish occupation of the country. Viewed in the light of these facts it becomes understandable that the influence of the Turkish occupation found its way easily into rural culture, particularly into horticulture and, via commerce, into dietary culture, because it served as a good example and improved the existing range of foods. Reception was made easier by the fact that the people living on the Great Plain practically continued their former culture of the Steppes. This meant the kind of foundation which profoundly connected Hungarian culture with Central Asian and Anatolian Turkish culture, although they were far removed from each other in both time and space, the method of land cultivation and lifestyle which developed under analogous ecological circumstances continued to thrive. Thanks to the works of Turkologists and historians of economics published in the last third of the 20th century we now have a more nuanced picture about conditions in Hungary under Turkish occupation. Research has yielded a number of new conclusions about the way in which the occupants managed and organised life in Hungary. Analysing the data of tax records and knowing the system of public administration it is probable that before the end of the 16th century neither the population, nor the economy itself suffered the degree of destruction that had been assumed (Dávid 1991, Hegyi 1995, Ágoston 1992). Real destruction set in not as a consequence of the fights but due to the subsequent onslaught of 'morbus hungaricus', the disease which made Hungary's name ill-omened and widely known throughout Europe. A combination of typhoid fever, dysentery and malaria, the epidemic first appeared in the first half of the 16th

century and was carried by affected mercenary soldiers to several countries throughout Europe. The disease was caused mostly by extreme weather conditions, the presence of extensive marshlands and the lack of sufficient hygiene (Ágoston 1992: 123).

In the occupied territories instead of economic decline, we often see, the signs of growing prosperity: an increasing boom in cattle-breeding, highly developed viniculture, horticulture, bustling market towns which evolved into regional trade centres in this very period and laid the foundations of their later affluence. The occupants, often decried as barbarians, turned out in retrospect to have settled in this country with the mentality of the careful landowner and although they drew considerable revenues from taxes, bearing these in mind they catered to provide circumstances for successful farming. The presence of the Turks did not topple the system of previous institutions. Although they divided the occupied areas into *vilayets* and *sanjaks*, these Turkish offices failed to take root and to exercise any effective influence over the everyday life of the Hungarian people beyond tax-collecting. The Turks never actually occupied the whole of Hungary as their rule extended only over the central third of the country.[1] Since this region represented the frontier status within their empire most of the occupants were soldiers and lived relatively secluded lives. There were no Anatolian peasants settling in Hungarian villages and even in the towns and cities they did not appear in great numbers. There were some settlers, but not many – only the number required to secure the alimentation of the local army, collecting the taxes and securing religious practice. Along with the soldiers came the officials of the local administration and the artisans and merchants tending to the needs of those living so far removed from their home. The total number did not exceed 50,000 (Ágoston 1992: 126).

They occupied Hungarian houses in the villages and towns, sharing their lot with the local population and slowly shaped the towns to their own liking. The typical quarters of Turkish towns, *mahalle* appeared. Next to the *djami* they also built *medrese* (schools), kitchens for the poor and public baths; in the larger cities also a hospital and a library. Indispensable elements of the Turkish lifestyle were small workshops of artisans which formed separate units arranged into streets according to the various crafts. There were streets for bootmakers, potters, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, furriers, belt-makers, locksmiths, pen-cutters, barbers, bakers and butchers. Their memory is still preserved in some places in the form of street names. Right beside them, of course, there were also Hungarian butchers and publicans, too – the only difference being that Hungarian butchers sold pork and the publicans served wine, while the Turkish drink-vendors sold *serbet* and *boza*. In between them there were also small grocery shops where they sold herbs, spices and oriental fabrics imported from distant lands. There were also masters who cooked the Turkish foods unknown to the Hungarians and sewed pieces of clothing. After the Turkish fashion, the artisans sat and worked in the open street… Anyone who is acquainted with contemporary

1 This is what historians call a condominium i.e. joint Turkish-Hungarian ownership.

Turkey can very easily imagine this, as this is normal everyday sight in cities even today in the Eastern part of the country. Wholesale trade was made possible by large, covered warehouse stores called *bedesten* which were built in the major cities (Bartha 1997: 59–71). In Buda, the *bedesten* was in the square just outside today's Matthias Church (Ágoston 1992: 132). Whenever necessary, they also stored products in the *djamis*, particularly military supplies. The various peace treaties between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire created highly favourable conditions for merchants who handled a considerable turnover in goods. Itinerant trade gradually became re-directed from Venice toward the West, its new centre was first Vienna and the Pest. Itinerant traders also appeared in major market towns and later as shop owners (Papp 2004: 74). It was through them and by the mediation of the local bourgeois population that a great many kitchen requisites, herbs, spices and dishes found their way to Hungary from Turkey and the Balkans. Turkish dietary culture was shaped by the plurality and ethnic complexity of the Ottoman Empire and its resulting multi-cultural character. The culinary culture of the Turkic population which preserved the Central Asian traditions was most powerfully affected by the cultures of Greece and the Middle East. This is also what then went on to affect Hungarian culture and left lasting traces on the areas of dietary culture mentioned above.

Horticulture, viniculture, fruit production

In Hungary various types of fruits from the Balkans were introduced and regular fruit production took root in the 16th century, and the first real boom in fruit production came in the 17th–18th centuries. Of the fruits grown in this country, apples, water chestnuts, rowan berries, strawberries and hazelnuts are the fruits mentioned in documents as early as the 11th century. Some fruits, including cornels, apples, walnuts, pears and sloe get their names (*som, alma, dió, körte, kökény*) from Old Turkic, and belong to the layer of Hungarian dating back to the Conquest, which means that the Hungarian had known these fruits long before the Turkish period. Clearly this was part of the reason why the cultural stratum of the Turkish occupation could easily become incorporated in overall Hungarian culture. That great traveller of the 17th century, Evliya Chelebi wrote about fruit production in Pécs in tones of admiration. He records that there were 170 types of fruit produced there at the time – he himself tasted 47 kinds of pears in one day in the house of Alay Beg (Surányi 1985: 78). Turkish rule brought no changes for the worse as regards horticulture and viniculture. The range was enriched by a number of new types in the occupied areas which only came under Turkish rule in subsequent waves. (The Szerémség area as early as 1523, while the centre of the country after the lost battle of Mohács.) Under Turkish influence considerable centres of gardening developed in a number of locations. Although wine grapes had to go due to the religious ban on alcohol in Islam, but this is the period when products distilled from wine began their rise to popularity, since the prohibitions of the Quran were interpreted as not to apply to 'cooked wines'

(Surányi 1985: 175). Due to tax holidays a great many vineyards were planted on the Great Plain, as well as elsewhere. For instance, the town of Jászberény did not pay tax to the porta for 16 year because they planted vines over an extensive area (Bathó 2014: 9–11), but the vine-growing areas of Szekszárd, Tolna and Pécs also survived Turkish rule undamaged. We know from Evliya Chelebi's records (Evlija 1985) that viniculture was significant around Buda. According to information from the castellan of Buda there were altogether 7000 vineyards in Buda ranging from the Középhegy hills, Szabadság hill and Gellért hill to the hill of Kelen and including Óbuda. Visiting Kassa, Evliya Chelebi describes vineyards where there were 22 types being grafted. This was the period when the black *common grapevine (Vitis vinifera)*, black muscat, blue and red 'kecskecsöcsű', red crimson and white 'pumpkin grapes' as well as 'pumpkin currants' (csausz) started to appear in the vineyards, as well as Kadarka which began spreading fast. (Kadarka had existed even before 1526), (Surányi 1985: 175–176). Commerce was also affecting garden cultivation considerably – cities such as Kecskemét (with its unique gardening culture) and Debrecen grew particularly strong. Going to pubs to drink now became a common practice not only at centres of commerce but even at places of production. So much so that in 1661 the three cities passed a decree to stop people visiting the pubs (Novák 2016).

Rice dishes

Cereals grown commonly in the 16th century, such as wheat, rye, barley, millet and oats, covered the needs of alimentation of the general public but were not sufficient for also supplying the army. During the time of Turkish rule new culinary habits started to appear. In order to supply their army, the Turks began to produce rice in their territories on the Balkans. This is how this plant also came to be known in Hungary. Huge rice plantations were established in the South of the country, but these were eradicated after the Turkish army withdrew and rice production was not re-launched until the 20th century when breeds adapted to the climate of our country were developed. It had, however, become a fixture in our culinary culture and so it can fairly be declared that we owe our rice-based dishes to the Turks as they became widespread during the time of the occupation (Ketter 1985: 259). The best example is *rizses hús* (*pilaf*) – a dish most popular in the cuisine of both nations. Turkish people mostly make it from mutton, while in Hungary mutton and rice is a dish mostly cooked in the Nagykunság area under the name *juhhúsos kása*. Another common rice-based dish in both Hungarian and Turkish cuisine is stuffed paprika (Hungarian *töltött paprika*, Turkish *biber*). The only major difference is that Turkish people use mutton for the stuffing, while in Hungarian cooking it is substituted by pork.

Various dishes where a rice-and-meat filling is stuffed inside cabbage or grape leaves are still thought of as the best-known foods of Turkish cuisine. The nomadic Turkic peoples did not grow cabbage or rice – they adopted these cultivated plants after the occupation of Constantinople (1435) from the population engaged in

irrigating farming of the Byzantine fashion and passed this skill on to the rest of Europe. The Hungarian dish referred to as stuffed cabbage (*töltöttkáposzta*), seen as a national classic, has been known since the time of the Turkish occupation. Its popularity is understandable since meat and cabbage had always been a popular combination in Hungarian cuisine. A MS *Booklet of the Art of Cooking* originating from the court of the Zrínyis from before 1662 refers to cabbage and meat as the token food of Hungary. Péter Apor offers the following laudation of cabbage meat, "No food more beloved by Hungarians could be found in past times than cabbage."

The extent to which the emigrant population exiled from the country after Rákóczi's War of Independence managed to retain their Hungarian culinary habits is indicated by one of the very few data we have – one of the letters of Kelemen Mikes. "Therefore, I say that a finely composed letter pleases the mind no less than the palate is pleased by cabbage finely covered in dill, and sour cabbage which appear from a distance like a little mountain of silver. (…) All I can worry myself about now is when I can eat cabbage again." This allows us to conclude that the dish known as *dolma* or *sarma* was not known at Rodosto at the time, even though it was considered a national dish along the Black Sea coast and so around Trabzon, too, and is much liked to this day. Its first Hungarian description appeared in 1695 in Tótfalusi's cookbook and it only became widespread in Hungary in the 18th century, under Turkish influence. Even today it is called by the name *sarma*, or stuffed cabbage, in Transylvania and the Southern parts of the country. The 200-year-old recipe tells us to make it from beef, as follows. "Ask for some cow's meat of the kind you would use for sausages or stuffed cabbage, peel off the veins and the blueish skin and cut it very fine. Take some good bacon and chop it very small, then take a handful of rice, wash it and mix it with the chopped meat and the bacon. Add salt and pepper as is due. Break two eggs over it all and mix it thoroughly. Take the leaves of a sour cabbage and cut the thick stalks out, put as much of the stuffing as you find fit into each leaf and then fold them up neatly. Once that is done, take one or two whole heads of cabbage and chop them into small slices, put a handful in the bottom of the saucepan, then four or five of the folded pieces, then again, the fine chopped cabbage. Sprinkle 15 whole grains of mild pepper on top of it all. Lay a few slices of bacon over the top and so fill the saucepan right to the top, with the pepper and the bacon, but make sure it is not tight so that you can shake it well while cooking. Fill the pot up with good beef bouillon, once it is all done, add a good roux, sprinkle saffron on top and serve it warm" (Simai 2011: 276).

One popular rice dish characteristic of both Turkish and Hungarian cuisines, particularly in the Eastern part of the Great Plain in the Nagykunság (Great Cumania) region, is *töltike* – minced meat with rice stuffed inside vine leaves. The Turkish variant, (*yaprak sarması*) is usually made without meat, and is flavoured with currants, parsley, mint, allspice and cinnamon; they slice lemons on top and so cook it. It is usually served cold, decorated with parsley. Turkish cuisine uses a very wide array of vegetables, the most common being beans, peas, black cumin (*çörek otu*), bulgur (crushed wheat), coriander, aubergines, vine leaves, tomatoes, paprika and a

great many Oriental herbs and spices, amongst which thyme and rosemary mostly define the flavouring of their dishes.

Shepherds' dishes

Meat dishes

The areas that have traditionally been most intensely involved in stock breeding within the Great Plain of Hungary are the left bank of the Tisza river and the region above the estuary of the rivers Körös. In the era before the regulation of the Tisza this part of the country was dominated mostly by wetlands and meadows and the most fruitful activity on the meadowlands was stockbreeding. The people of the Kiskunság, Nagykunság (Cumania) and Jászság (Iazigia) regions created their livelihood at the cost of very hard labour struggling on the salty flatlands. The region was kept alive by the periodic flooding of the rivers Tisza, Berettyó and the three branches of the Körös. Most of the area was used as pasture for large stock, while land cultivation was only allowed to take up as much of the area as was necessary to cover local needs. The characteristics of the landscape provided the foundations of a lifestyle which kept alive both the shepherding population of the plain and, at the same time, the system of market towns which existed in parallel. The extensive fields were mostly used for pasture where livestock was bred. Due to a drop in population numbers, the Turkish occupation actually favoured the keeping of large livestock on the plain. The newly settled Muslim and South Slavic population clearly preferred sheep breeding to keeping pigs and cattle.

Mutton dishes

The most important example in this context is the Cuman population who lived at Szentkirály in the 15th – 16th centuries and had a considerable culture of sheep-breeding. Archaeological research has identified the remains of pens and sties dug halfway into the ground and covered with one-way slanting roofs. Such simple structures were used in keeping sheep and pigs. Although the lifestyle of the Cumans who had settled at Szentkirály changed by the 15th century, certain elements of the traditional way of stockkeeping have survived to this day (Pálóczi Horváth 2014: 182). The Hungarian word *karám* 'pen', the name of that characteristic structure built by shepherds, belongs to the Pecheneg-Cuman (Besenyő-Kun) layer of Turkish loan-words in Hungarian. It is known from 16th century Turkish *defters* that Szentkirály was the scene of considerable sheep and cattle breeding (Pálóczi Horváth 2014: 182). In 1546 the more affluent of farmers would keep 150–200 sheep, and the census of 1562 shows that farmers owning 250–300 were not rare. At the time of the census there were altogether 1582 sheep counted at this village, which was a considerable number for the period. The word-stock related to animal-breeding in the Hungarian language shows clearly (our words related to keeping sheep are of Turkic origin and

belong to the layer of the language dating back to the time of the Conquest) that the influence of the culture of the age of Turkish occupation continues to live on in the middle cultural layer, the Cuman stratum, and it is this cultural element that may be traced in today's rural culture of the Nagykunság region. The extensive animal farming which existed in the 17th–19th centuries is in organic historical connection with the extensive technique of animal keeping used at the time of the Conquest and the age of the House of Árpád (Szabadfalvi 1997). The predominance of stockbreeding prevailed right until the 19th century, the time of the great river regulations. A characteristic of this part of the world is the scattered farmsteads of the Great Plain which is distinctive in that these units never transformed into classic farms but preserved their dependence on the town. Although the system of stockkeeping was eventually transformed, mostly due to the ecological changes brought about by the river regulations, but it still remained significant in Great Cumania (Nagykunság) and neighbouring Hortobágy (Bellon 1996: 41–42). The extensive, year-round pasture method of the latter region preserved for a long time the shepherding culture which then transmitted various archaic elements of rural gastronomy to us. Since Hungarian grey cattle were capital stock, people would more commonly kill and cook mutton and pork. Despite changes in culinary habits in the 17th–18th centuries, mutton was an absolute staple and was listed by contemporary cookbooks as one of the basic raw materials of the nobility's kitchen. The court cookbook of the Prince of Transylvania from the 16th century lists the following mutton dishes: "mutton with red cabbage; mutton in vinegar; leg of lamb with *bigoz* (a sauce with nutmeg, ginger, pepper and vinegar); mutton with rice; new style mutton with a head of cabbage; mutton with sour cabbage, mutton with sweet cabbage, leg of mutton interlarded with garlic; cold mutton for travelling either the front or the back end; mutton with garlic sauce; stomach of mutton stuffed; mutton with savoury milk; lamb deep-fried in breadcrumbs; head of lamb deep-fried in breadcrumbs; lamb with sorrel; leg of lamb with sour cream *sufa*" (Bornemisza, Anna szakácskönyvét 1680-ból közzétette, Lackó 1983).

Some of the dishes listed are known even today.

In Great Cumania (Nagykunság) and the periphery of the Hortobágy mutton has preserved its role to this day as a part of the festive menu, particularly the string of dishes served at weddings. A *Manual for Farmers of the Field* (Mezei Gazda Kézi Könye) published at Kassa in 1831 offers the following instructions, "Nothing will better further the prosperity of a man farming the fields than breeding mutton combined with breeding cattle. Cattle is required to provide him with manure so that he may farm his fields and to get from them some drips, if not a broad influx, of revenue. The only source of solid income can be sheep. That is, if he can command the mastery of breeding them" (Staut 1831).

As regards the technologies of Hungarian rural cuisine, stewing meats goes back a long time. Meat stews (*pörkölt*) are mentioned by sources among customary peasant dishes as one of the typical foods of shepherds. However, the colour and flavour of this dish was changed radically after paprika became known in this country in the 16th

century. As it grew widespread from the 1700's onwards, paprika transformed *pörkölt* to become the national classic known today – no cookbook fails to mention it and no traveller goes by without referring to this hot and spicy Hungarian dish. Mátyás Bél writes as follows, 'Hungarian pepper is so hot that if you touch your eye with it you may actually lose your eyesight. Therefore, many oppose it, nevertheless its use is widespread in many parts' (Bél 1730). A German traveler came to the same conclusion. "This Turkish pepper, which is referred to as paprika around these parts, I first tasted on the next occasion, when it was used to season the stuffing of cabbage. It is terribly hot, but does not linger for a long time and makes the stomach warm. I believe that hot things of this kind are very useful in such lazy parts of the world as this, because they resist shivering. (…) My most pleasant experience here was an excellent Hungarian national dish, meat with paprika, which I enjoyed tremendously. (…) Once it is ripe, they string them together, hang them out to dry and then crush them" (Surányi 1985). *Pörkölt* as a meat dish in its own right was first made from mutton in the Nagykunság area in the middle of the Great Plain – and still is. Mutton has retained its considerable role in rural cuisine in this region – they cook 26 different dishes from mutton. The local manner of cooking this meat, where the head, hoofs and tail are scorched, the meat is stewed and the food, particularly the head, is distributed ritually, is considered an element of cultural heritage which is a remnant of the archaic Cuman culture in the heart of the Great Plain (Füvessy 1974: 221, Bartha 2002: 128). Scorching over an open fire gives a unique flavour to the food. In Karcag, Kunhegyes, Túrkeve, Kunmadaras and neighbouring Tiszaörs and Nagyivány (shepherds' village next to the Hortobágy) it is still common practice to scorch the hoofs and the head. In the Jászság area this way of cooking the meat has been recorded at one place, Jászkisér, but this village became repopulated in the 18th century as a result of an outflow of Cuman population in the 18th century. The tradition related to eating the 'sheep body' at festive occasions, particularly weddings, is a gesture of respect to the person most highly honoured by the community. It is seen as the sign of the greatest honour in the Nagykunság (particularly Karcag) if a guest is given the sheep's head that was cooked along with the mutton stew – which he or she then has to distribute among those around. A particular delicacy is the brain, seasoned generously with black pepper and paprika (Bartha 2002: 128–129, Bereczki 1986: 91–92). This method of cooking mutton is particularly characteristic in the Nagykunság, but mutton dishes are equally common among shepherds of the Kiskunság. Otto Herman noted during one of his collecting tours in the Kiskunság, this is a place where the offal is also cooked in with the *paprikás* (Herman 1914: 245). In the rural cuisine of Anatolian Turks and the Balkan countries a frequent feature of rural cuisine is *kokereç*, sheeps' intestines seasoned with Oriental herbs and spices and twisted around a large cylinder. This roasting appliance, used in the streets, is available everywhere. Roasted until tender, *kokereç* is then placed inside pita-bread. We find no parallel in Hungarian cooking – the only shared feature is that shepherds of Nagyivány used to include the small intestines in their *paprikás* after cleaning the intestines and slicing them into finger-wide stripes. The first written record of

Goulash, a dish thought of as particularly Hungarian, occurred in the form '*Gujás-hús*' in 1787 in a work by István Mátyus titled *Diatetica*. A point of interest is that Mátyus, who had come from Transylvania, had no direct experience of the traditional dish of the shepherds of the Great Plain, but the writing reveals that *gulyás* was already a widely used food name by that time and the way of preparation was widely known. It keeps cropping up in the writings of various authors over the subsequent years as a food name that requires no further explanation. A notary working for József Gvadányi at Peleske travelled to the Hortobágy in 1790 where *gulyáshús* was made for him by a cowherd. The point of interest is that Gvadányi does not mention the name of the dish and that among the ingredients he does not mention paprika, even though at other points in his poetry he refers to it under the name *törökbors* (Turkish pepper). One reason for omitting the name of the food may have been that the shepherds and cowherds themselves merely refer to it as '*hús*', meaning meat, - they 'cook meat'. Generally the phrase *gulyás* (Goulash) was only used in the literary vernacular, in the language of the people these dishes are usually referred to as *pörkölt* or *paprikás*. Linguists derive the name of the dish from the word *gulya* 'a herd of cows' (Zaicz 2006: 247).

Naturally, the dish *gulyás* also came to the notice of the Turks, as testified by an endearing explanation from folk etymology. "When Suleiman the Great ruled in Hungary and his cook could not find mutton or lamb anywhere, first he cooked *taş kebab* or something similar from veal. This is how he wanted to please the *padishah*. The sultan tasted a mouthful or two of the food and then turned to the cook and asked, 'Who did you make this dish for?' The cook thought the food was failing to please, so he rapidly answered, 'For the slaves, your majesty!' The sultan actually loved the new dish, so he gave it the name *kul aşı* 'slaves' food'. This is how *kulashi* gradually turned into goulash… according to popular etymology viewed from the Turkish angle."

Drinks

Boza

We have every reason to assume that millet is one of our oldest types of cereals. Even the Chinese emperors of yore sowed the first millet seeds amidst a ceremony of great pomp. Researchers consider the genetic centre or fountainhead of this species to have been around the border area of China and Mongolia (Bellon 1981: 233). In Asia and Eastern Europe millet cultivation was significant until the 19th century; it was considered the most important cereal and the No. 1 staple in the diet of the common people. Due to its high starch content (60%) it was excellently suited for brewing beer. Its great advantage and cultural historical significance were that being a plant with a short gestation cycle it could easily be bred even by nomadic peoples. The sharp beer-like fluid gained from it through fermentation is called *boza* and is known in

Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Macedonia, Monte Negro, Bosnia, Romania and the Ukraine. Writing about the Kirgiz, György Almásy says, "I have already mentioned the alcoholic beverage of the nomads, the millet-beer called *magzyn*, as well as the similar fermented drink referred to as *buza* or *szra*. Although consumption of these is forbidden, they are relatively widely used" (Almásy 1903: 694).

It is highly probable that *boza*, the drink produced by fermentation from millet, was first made by the Turkic peoples of Central Asia in the 10th century – it is from here that it spread through the Caucuses to the Balkans and Hungary. In the Ottoman empire it was brewed in practically every village or town, it was the most widely drunk liquid, probably due to contaminated drinking water. (Among the nomads *kumis* played a similar role.) It retained its popularity until the 16th century when sultan Selim II finally banned what was called *Tartar boza*, a brewed beverage containing opium. He is associated with the first description of alcohol-free sweet *boza*, a favoured drink of the Albanians. This drink remained popular for a much longer time, so much so that 17th century traveller Evliya Chelebi described that in Istanbul there are some 300 points selling *boza*, and the activity has developed into an industry employing a thousand people. *Boza* was particularly popular among janissaries, but the common people also drank it. The army itself also included a great many *boza*-brewers. Since it contains little alcohol, in moderate quantities it does not cause inebriation, it was considered a roborative drink. The Ottomans also referred to it as *janissaries' joy*.

Linguists attribute the Hungarian word *boza* to the Cumans, although it was known among the Hungarians even before the arrival of the Cumans. The earliest known occurrence is in the inscriptions on the gold treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. Although millet was known to the Hungarians very early, the first time it appears as a place name (*Kölesér*) was recorded in 1138 in Bihar County (Bellon 1981: 234).

There are plenty of sources that mention *boza*. Primate Miklós Oláh commemorates the drink in his descriptions of Hungary as follows. "On the plains of the Cuman people, besides wines which are brought there from a distance, there is one more drink commonly consumed, made after its own style from millet and water, which they call *bóza*" (Szarvas, Simonyi 1890: 302). This Hungarian drink is also mentioned in the Érdy Codex (1526–1527).[2] Millet was used in a crushed form, ground in a dry-mill or in wooden 'millet mortar' before use. This procedure was described by medical student Pál Márton who accompanied English governor L. Hudson as a translator along his travels in the 1820's through Constantinople all the way to Smyrna. Accordingly, millet was first roasted on hot stones, then ground by hand-mills. In a roasted state millet keeps for a long time, this is the explanation why the Cumans used to transport it and brew *boza* from it when the weather was suitable. Millet is a yellow colour, once roasted, it gets a brownish tint and this alone could give *boza* its colour. Rough-ground millet flour was cooked in water over a low fire

2 Nyelvemléktár. Régi magyar codexek és nyomtatványok [Linguistic Relics. Old Hungarian Codices and Printed Documents]. Vol. 4. Budapest 1876

to a thick, porridge-type consistency. Due to its high starch content during cooking it turned gluey and released a lot of sugar which allowed it to start fermenting easily. Subsequently it was cooled down and left to stand for a few days. Pál Márton's writing reveals that in the Turkish and Tartar method the fermentation lasted eight hours. The liquid began to produce a foam, and after the fermentation the sediment settled and the liquid on top became purified. This is what they called sweet *boza*. It is highly likely that to accelerate fermentation they added lactobacilli through sourdough which caused it to have a slightly sharp, stinging flavour, due to the carbon-dioxide it now contained. A chemical analysis of *boza* from Pancsova in the late 19th century revealed that 100 cm^3 contained 1.62-1.75g of alcohol (Szathmáry 1932: 39–40).

In Hungarian healing practice *boza* was considered a medical remedy. The famous doctor Gáspár Kőrösi considered it a medicine. When Palatine Tamás Nádasdi's wife grew ill, he prescribed her to drink *boza* and she did indeed recover – probably due to the lactic acid's ability to kill bacteria. In 1554 he wrote, jokingly, "My Lady, wife of the chief Justice of the Cumans, is in such health, perhaps from drinking *boza*, that she seems healthier than Methuselah himself" (Paládi 1966: 79; Bellon 1981: 252).

Another doctor has also commemorated the healing quality of *boza* – the army doctor of Temesvár, a much-liked student of Linné's, János Krammer when he toured Hungary. He considered *boza* a diuretic substance and often recommended it to his patients for such purposes (Szathmáry 1932: 39). At first people used millet to brew *boza* and every nation which grew this plant was also acquainted with *boza*. Millet was then gradually squeezed out by other cereals – one could imagine that *boza* also sank into oblivion. But this is not what happened. Cuman Captain János Laczka mentions in 1862 that the poorer Cumans use sweetcorn to brew *boza*. They grind sweetcorn to flour in a hand mill, knead it into a scone and dry it or even scorch it inside an oven, then crush it in a container and pour lukewarm water over it. The liquid then ferments and turns into a yellow drink with a slight bite. Cuman Captain János Laczka also mentions that instead of *boza* this is called *ciberer*. But the flavour and the colour of the two drinks must have been fairly similar (Szathmáry 1932: 39–40).

Rajmund Rapaics was of the opinion that the production and consumption of *boza* was squeezed out by more modern methods of drink production which started out from the monasteries (Rapaics 1934: 69). It was not forgotten – indeed, in the Nagykunság region *boza* was brewed as late as the 1960's at Karcag, sometimes from wheat and at other times from sweet corn and referred to *kunsavó*. The word *boza* was known all over the Nagykunság, but used only in its derivative forms at Kunmadaras, where drunk people were referred to as *bozás, bebozitált, bozálkodik* – someone who had taken *boza*.

Boza is a fairly multi-coloured phenomenon in cultural history, a drink prevalent from Central Asia through Asia Minor all the way through the Balkans and Europe, brewed at first from millet, later also from other types of cereals, and still brewed today, when different variants of the drink are still known. Most widely known are Bulgarian, Albanian and Turkish *boza*. In the 19th century the Ottoman Turks favoured alcohol-free Albanian *boza*, while the Armenians liked the alcoholic versions. In

Istanbul and many towns of contemporary Turkey this drink is still widespread and popular, served most recently with cinnamon or chickpeas. The various types are sold by noted and prestigious old *bozadji* (boza vendors) such as Vefa Bozacisi in Istanbul, Akman Boza in Ankara, Ömür Bozacisi in Bursa or Karakedi Bozacisi in Eskişehir. In Bulgaria the traditional Bulgarian breakfast is consumed with *boza*. In Kirgizia it is sold in the streets in the summer months, but this is the variant brewed from wheat. The Romanian variant is referred to as *braga* and is somewhat sweeter than the Turkish or Bulgarian variant, similar to the *boza* of the Macedonians.

Coffee

We owe the custom of drinking coffee to the Turks. Tradition has it that coffee had come from Arabia, from the city of Mokha in Yemen through Persia. In the 14th–15th centuries it was used not only for pleasure but also as medication. In Istanbul coffee shops opened as early as the 1550's. Suleiman the Great restricted coffee consumption in 1552 and later coffee drinking was banned on multiple occasions in the empire. These prohibitions did not last long, however, as coffee irresistibly set out to conquer the world. Coffee became the national drink of the Turks. It spread from various parts of Turkey to Europe through Armenian merchants and reached Hungary, too. In Pest and Buda from 1579 onwards there were Turkish coffee makers (*kahvendji*) making the black drink with its enticing scent in coffee shops (*Káhve Háne*), (Ketter 1985: 165). Coffee drinking became a part of our dietary habits. It grew so popular that by the early 18th century coffee shops turned into veritable cafés and gradually became the centres of the social life of the community. The phrase *kávéház* (coffee house or café) first appears in the epistles of Kelemen Mikes in 1738. Today coffee is so popular in both Turkish and Hungarian gastronomy that our life is unimaginable without it. Coffee-drinking has become a ritual. If you smell the scent of coffee lingering about a house when you enter you can be sure you are a welcome visitor.

Sweets

Honeycomb toffee is originally an Armenian sweet, but it reached Hungary through Turkish mediation. The same is true of gingerbread, Hungarian *mézeskalács*. Beekeeping was a considerable source of revenue for farmers. In the Jászság area people paid a one-tenth tax on beekeeping to the Turks. In 1671 the Jász villages record that they paid a tax of butter, lambs and pigs collected from house to house and also paid a tenth of bees and wine (Bathó 2007: 23). As far as we know today, the first Hungarian gingerbread guild was founded in Pozsony in 1619, but Kassa was also seen as a centre of gingerbread-making as early as the 17th century. The regulations of the gingerbread-makers' guild of Debrecen are known from 1713. This city is one of the most significant centres of this activity to this day, where excellent quality gingerbread has been made for centuries.

The beneficial health effect of quince jelly was already mentioned in the famous Herbárium of 1778. Quinces were produced in substantial quantities in the 17th century. The first cookbook which survived in the Hungarian language, printed in

Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis' printing house at Kolozsvár, describes no fewer than 7 recipes for quinces. Scones (*pogácsa*) are much liked among Hungarian savoury cakes and since the word itself is of Old Turkic origin (*bagandja*), we have reason to believe that it was already known to the conquering Hungarians and the effect was only further enhanced during the Ottoman Turkish era.

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